

REVIEW

Covid-19, Inequality and Older People: Everyday Life During the Pandemic

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Covid-19, Inequality and Older People confronts the hegemonic biomedical narrative of the COVID-19 pandemic and takes a longitudinal and sociological lens on older people living through the lockdown in the Greater Manchester metropolitan area. The book employs a lifecourse and community-based perspective to show what the social and cultural implications of the COVID measures have been for older persons in their communities, whilst also demonstrating how the lockdown exacerbated already-existing inequalities. The book consists of ten chapters, comprising an introduction, a theoretical and a methodological chapter, four in-depth chapters, a discussion chapter, a recommendations chapter and a conclusion.

Chapter 1, 'Introduction', presents the book's rationale with an overview of its different parts. From the outset, the authors make clear that studies addressing the everyday experiences of the pandemic are limited. The introduction presents its aim of exploring how stay-at-home orders and social distancing rules severely impacted the lives of older persons, focusing on the differential impact on the lives of minority groups, such as those living alone, persons with lower educational attainment or multi-ethnic communities. Chapter 2, 'A Sociological Analysis of the Impact of COVID-19 on Older People', counters bio-medicalised perspectives on ageing through looking at the lifecourse. The authors propose a sociological framework that rethinks how government measures to halt the virus served primarily to reinforce existing inequalities, especially with regards to older persons already living in disadvantaged communities.

Chapter 3, 'Methodology', outlines the different stages of the research process. The authors made use of a longitudinal design: three interviews were done at different moments during the pandemic's first year. In total, they conducted 102 semi-structured interviews with older persons, as well as 21 interviews with community organisations. Collaborative and co-research methodology guided the research process. Chapter 4, 'Everyday Life Under Lockdown: Relationships and

Routines', thematically addresses the experiences and views of the participants about the lockdown period. In doing so, it lays the foundations for the other empirical chapters. Chapter 5, 'Experiences of the Pandemic: A Biographical and Longitudinal Analysis of Four Case Studies', uses a lifecourse perspective to examine four individual participants and the changes that they experienced through time, focusing on biographical turning points earlier in life that explain responses to lockdown measures.

Chapter 6, 'Changes in Relationships', uses the paradigm of 'landscapes of care' (Milligan and Wiles, 2010) to demonstrate shifting spatial patterns of care and sociality *vis-à-vis* pre-pandemic life. Through use of personal narratives, the authors demonstrate the uneven impact of the social distancing measures, and the impact of technology on the lives of participants. Some felt that social networks became more restricted, while others said they expanded. Chapter 7, 'The Role of Community Organisations and Social Infrastructure', investigates how the pandemic affected community organisations and social infrastructure at a local level, drawing on testimonies from 21 different community leaders, organisers and activists. This chapter, owing to its distinct focus and perspective, feels somewhat disconnected from the broader scope of the book. Nevertheless, it presents some compelling results underscoring the role of community organisations in providing relevant care to older residents and the circumstances of the pandemic that demanded rigorous adaptations to its functioning.

Chapter 8, 'Understanding Everyday Life During the Pandemic', reiterates the overarching themes that arose during the fieldwork, summarising the findings thematically, with special attention to the increasing importance of technology to compensate for social distancing. The chapter is integral to the book as it reflects on ageing in times of lockdown in a neighbourhood context. Chapter 9, 'COVID-19, Inequality and Older People: Developing Community-centred Interventions', recommends policy changes, such as community empowerment and the recruitment of community advocates, that support ageing in place and that position older persons as active partners in developing future policies founded on the social implications of lockdown measures. In Chapter 10, 'Conclusion', the necessity of community-based and collaborative research is again highlighted, and important research areas for the future are identified, such as how lockdowns restructure social relations and community infrastructure, the experiences of minority groups during a pandemic, the role of technology in perpetuating inequality and combatting ageism.

This book succeeds in portraying the lived experiences of older people from different minority backgrounds, as well as community organisations' responses to the lockdown and social distancing measures following the COVID-19 pandemic. Taking these different perspectives into account demonstrates how responses to the lockdown are shaped by structural disadvantage during the lifecourse. Voice is given to different minority groups, such as older persons with a migration background, those identifying as LGBTQ+ or those who live in disadvantaged parts of Greater Manchester. In this regard, the book is ambitious in its scope by delving into the intricacies of diverse individual narratives and experiences during the lockdown period. This comes, however, at the expense of a more nuanced examination of the responses of particular social subgroups in their response to the lockdown.

Whilst the research does an excellent job in sampling older persons from minority groups, this objective would have been even better served if an intersectional theoretical lens had been included (*e.g.* what does it mean to be an older woman with a non-European background in relation to an older man with a non-European background?). Nevertheless, the authors have done a commendable job of elevating the social to the level of the biomedical in understanding the past pandemic. The book shows how important lessons can be learned through portraying and analysing the lived experience of older residents in Greater Manchester that will certainly prove lifesaving in preparing for the next global crisis.

Reference

Milligan C and Wiles J (2010) Landscapes of care. *Progress in Human Geography* 34, 736–754.

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